Understanding the impact of alcohol use

A new report launched today by the World Health Organisation (WHO) has stated that wider implementation of policies needed to save lives and reduce the health impact of harmful alcohol drinking. Harmful use of alcohol results in the death of 2.5 million people annually, causes illness and injury to many more, and is increasingly affecting younger generations.

The Global status report on alcohol and health analyses available evidence on alcohol consumption, consequences and policy interventions at global, regional and national levels. It stated that:

• Nearly 4 per cent of all deaths are related to alcohol. Most alcohol-related deaths are caused by alcohol result from injuries, cancer, cardiovascular diseases and liver cirrhosis.

• Globally, 6.2 per cent of all male deaths are related to alcohol, compared to 1.1 per cent of female deaths. One-in-five men in the Russian Federation and neighbouring countries die due to alcohol-related causes.

• Globally, 520 000 young people aged 15-29 years die annually, from alcohol-related causes, resulting in 8 per cent of all deaths in that age group.

Endorsed by WHO’s Member States in May 2010, the Global Strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol was to promote a range of proven effective measures for reducing alcohol-related harm. The measures include taxation on alcohol products, restricting alcohol advertising, through allowing fewer outlets selling alcohol, raising age limits for those buying and using effective drink-driving measures.

Pioneering partnership between Smile-on, Free State

In a groundbreaking agreement, the Central University of Technology, Free State, South Africa (CUT) has joined forces with UK-based leading provider of blended learning resources Smile-on Ltd for the provision of a range of the company’s resources to support CUT’s educational vision.

The contract was signed by Noam Tamir, CEO of Smile-on and Jeanne Oosthuysen, Lecturer and programme manager at CUT, at the recent Clinical Innovations Conference South Africa. This will see five of Smile-on’s leading programmes integrated into CUT’s dental programme: The Bleaching Business, Communication in Dentistry: Stories from the Practice, Key Skills in Primary Dental Care, Clinical Photography, and Dental Nursing Education for Tomorrow (DNNET).

Commenting on the news, Ms Oosthuysen said: “The vision of CUT is to be a globally connected African university of technology that focuses on the needs of Southern Africa and supports graduates for citizenship with skills and competencies in appropriate technologies.

“For me, learning is a way to interact with the world – it is a lifelong process. As modern-day educators, we are constantly faced with this challenge to adapt and change in order to broaden our horizons and expertise. CUT and the University of the Free State are the only higher educational institutions in the central region of our country. The lack of a School of Dentistry in the Free State presents a big challenge, as CUT is offering only the training in dentistry from the central region of South Africa. This problem has been addressed by cooperative links and support systems that has been established with international experts in this field of research and education in dentistry.

“Resources in dentistry, dental education colleagues and other support systems are often only available at dental faculties in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban. This challenge is the reason for wanting to be involved with Smile-on and being a pioneer of blended learning for dental assisting in South Africa.” Noam Tamir, CEO of Smile-on commented “At Smile-on we share the vision of connecting our clients to a global network and we are delighted that by working together with CUT we can help bring much needed resource to this region.”

Mercury negotiations

The FDI Mercury Task Team, led by the FDI President Elect, Dr Orlando da Silva, participated in the second session of the United Nations Environment Programme Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC 2) to prepare a global legally binding instrument on mercury that took place in Chiba, Japan from 24-28th January.

The FDI’s team is working in close co-operation with members of the International Association for Dental Research to articulate to the INC that dental amalgam currently constitutes an important element in maintaining and protecting global public health, as reflected in FDI General Assembly Resolution on Dental Amalgam (GA 2009) and Dental Amalgam Motion (GA 2010).

Importantly, FDI made an intervention at the INC 2 plenary session highlighted strategies that phase up prevention for dental caries and associated health programmes that we believe will result in the phase down of restorative materials, including dental amalgam. This will lead to the reduction in the use of dental restorative materials and ensure optimal oral health, particularly for those most disadvantaged, reducing in need of treatment.

Tribunal by day, happy couple by night

A wife has told reporters that she is still “happily married” to her dentist husband - despite suing him at an employment tribunal.

Helen Hutcheson, 46, claimed that her husband, John Hutcheson, had promised her that she would be paid £5,000-a-month when she became a full-time member of staff; however, he had failed to keep his promise and when she was eventually taken on at the clinic in August 2009 she was paid a wage of £1,500 a month.

Helen originally began working at the Rosemount Dental Clinic in Aberdeen in 2008 after agreeing to work unpaid for a year to show she was worth employing, however, she quit and launched legal proceedings for unfair dismissal.
Editorial comment

As I write, there is considerable turmoil in the profession over the upcoming GDC meeting where the Council will decide whether or not to rescind the use of ‘Dr’ as a courtesy title by dentists. This is quite an emotive subject for dental professionals, with conversations flowing from all channels about the move either demeaning the status of dentists, or being against the use of Dr to be at the level of surgeon, and every degree in between.

For me, I find the inconsistent use of ‘Dr’ to be the confusing issue. When speaking to dentists (I do that sometimes you know!) I never know whether to use ‘Dr’, ‘Mr’ or ‘Oi’ – though I do find that ‘Oi’ works best.

Before I go, I can’t let this week go by without mentioning the YouTube videos by NHS Northamptonshire. For those not in the know, this is a two-minute viral video spoofing the classic ‘vampire in the bedroom’ scene with the twist of bad oral hygiene.

Although it was released in November 2010, it seems to have captured recently the imagination of the tech-savvy dental fraternity. ‘True Blood’ it isn’t, but it is an appropriate approach to get young people interested in visiting the dentist! Go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hx1HzNaJwZU&feature=you tube_gdata_player and see what you think.

ARF x 36k

The General Dental Council has successfully processed 56,962 annual retention fee (ARF) payments from its dentist registrants.

The deadline to pay the fee for 2011 was 31 December 2010. Nearly 5,000 of those who paid used the regulators’ eGDC website www.eGDC-uk.org.

This allows users to:
• Log their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) hours;
• Update their registered address or complete a Direct Debit instruction online;
• Access their Annual Practising Certificate information;
• Have control over many of their registration responsibilities 24/7.

886 dentists were removed from the register for not paying their ARF – so far 171 applications for restoration to the register have been received. 514 dentists voluntarily requested that their names be removed.

If a dentist missed the deadline to pay their ARF they will need to apply to be restored to the register. Practising while not registered is considered illegal practice and the GDC will take action through the criminal courts. Dentists who want to return to the register must:
• Complete a form to apply for restoration
• Have a medical examination and provide a character reference
• Pay a fee of £696 – which includes the ARF
• If they were practising overseas while off the register, they must provide a letter of good standing from the relevant authority of the country/state in which they last worked
• If they were working in the UK when their name was removed from the register, they and their employer will need to explain the circumstances in a letter.

If this has occurred they are advised to contact their solicitor or defence organisation before submitting their application.

Further information can be found at www.gdc-uk.org or by calling 0845 222 4141.

NEW

40% of denture patients are concerned about denture odour1

Yet many denture wearers fail to keep their dentures clean2.

That’s because brushing dentures with ordinary toothpaste can scratch denture surfaces3. And scratched surfaces can lead to bacterial growth4 leading to denture odour.

Poligrip denture cleansing tablets effectively remove plaque and tough stains5 without scratching3, to leave dentures clean and fresh. Poligrip Total Care denture cleansing tablets also kill 99.9% of odour causing bacteria.

Recommend Poligrip denture cleansing tablets to help your patients control denture odour


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Young and CROOKED

An engaging short film geared towards the younger generation is making headlines. CROOKED, now available on DVD, is a light-hearted tale of Samantha, a 12-year-old girl who is obsessed with losing her last baby tooth, (which happens to be crooked). Her fascination lies with her determination to get the perfect smile...and, of course, win the heart of the new boy at school.

Throughout the film, Samantha provides subtle but constant encouragement to turn brushing and flossing into a daily habit; throughout her time at school she brushes her teeth after lunch, and happily visits the dentist. And although the films goal is dental hygiene education, CROOKED becomes a balance of information and teen entertainment.

The idea for CROOKED occurred when a man who had experienced serious health problems approached Florida filmmaker Todd Thompson and his Orlando-based production company, Stars North. The man’s hope was that Thompson could create an educational film that was entertaining and would teach the importance of dental health to young audiences.

The result was CROOKED, a 17-minute film that stars Kendall Ganey (The Little Princess, Ace Ventura Pet Detective), Jo Mitchell (October Road, Eastbound and Down) and introduces Sarah Grace Ackerman and Justin Garcia.

Featured in the 2011 American Dental Association® Catalogue, CROOKED is available online at www.dentalmovie.org or www.amazon.com.

Reports have stated that a percentage of sales from the film will be donated to National Childrens Oral Health Foundation: Americas Toothfairy®, a nonprofit organisation dedicated to delivering oral healthcare to underserved children. For more information, please visit www.ncohf.org.

Films on teeth are fast becoming a popular choice for educating children © Stars North

Tooth loss linked to breast cancer

A new study suggests that women may be more than 11 times more likely to suffer from breast cancer if they have missing teeth and gum disease.

The study carried out by the Karolinska Institute in Sweden on over three thousand patients, showed that out of the 41 people who developed breast cancer those who had gum disease and loss of teeth were 11 times more likely to develop cancer.

As this appears to be the first study presenting such findings, Chief Executive of the British Dental Health Foundation, Dr Nigel Carter, believes more needs to be done in order to confirm the results.

Dr Carter said: “If future studies can also testify to the link between missing teeth and breast cancer, more has to be done to raise public awareness on the issue. The British Dental Health Foundation has a history of campaigning for better oral health, and the findings presented in the study indicate another clear link between your general and oral health.”

The study was carried out in Sweden

Teeth the Musical scoops global film prize

The team who made a 15-minute film to get kids brushing their teeth is off to Canada this weekend to having just won the ‘Best Education Award’ at the Picture This Film Festival (PTFF).

PTFF is a competitive and exhibition festival, which features films that are about disability and films on any subject that were produced, directed and written by people with disabilities. Teeth the Musical DVD has already scooped the 2010 Patrons Prize at the National Oral Health Promotion Group annual conference, adding to the 2010 Education Business Award from Somerset County Council.

JUMPuts animated film ‘Teeth the Musical’ was produced with and for learning disabled young people.

Travelling to Canada will be member of the cast and Bridge Water College student, Freddie Weillman accompanied by film-maker Tom Stubbs, part of Biggerhouse Film, who together, with registered charity Somerset Film, makes up the JUMPuts partnership.

Tom Stubbs said to reporters: “This is a great honour and a fantastic opportunity for Freddie and I to present our film to an international audience, to fly the flag for Somerset creative business and he talent of disabled film-makers.”

Working with fellow Calgary winners Purple Field Productions, the film-makers are supported by the local branch of AC Mole and Sons, and Aardman Animation, who generously donated an original Wallace and Gromit drawing signed by Nick Park to help fund the visit.

Teeth the Musical is suitable for learning disabled audiences as well as for primary school students and is available on DVD from www.jumpcuts.org.uk.

A Bristol-based senior dental officer said to reporters earlier this week: “I have never seen anything like Teeth the Musical anywhere else. It is absolutely fantastic in all respects.”

‘Proportionate and effective’ approach

The vast majority of those who work in health and social care are committed individuals with a strong sense of professionalism who aspire to deliver the highest standards. However, where there is poor practice or behaviour that presents a risk to the public, it is vital that swift action is taken, whether by employers, or by national regulatory bodies.

The regulatory system is becoming increasingly complex and expensive and requires continual Government intervention to keep it up to date. The Government must move to a proportionate and effective system that imposes the least possible costs and complexity, while maintaining safety and confidence for patients, service users, carers and the wider public.

Recently, Health Secretary Andrew Lansley presented ‘Enabling Excellence’ to Parliament regarding this debate. He said: “Regulation of healthcare workers and social workers makes an important contribution to safeguarding the public, including vulnerable adults and children. But we need an approach to professional regulation that is proportionate and effective.”

At the moment, most processes - such as registration, investigation and complaints - that regulators need to have are set out in ‘rules’. Devolving powers to the regulators will give them greater freedom to define their own processes without approval from the Privy Council or Department of Health. Voluntary assured registration is intended to improve standards and drive up the quality of care without imposing the costs of mandatory regulation.

The Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (CHRE) will set the standards for registrants and accredited organisations meeting its standards, meaning the public and employers would be able to easily identify what register a worker belongs to.

The abolition of the General Social Care Council forms part of our wider programme of social care reforms which will deliver a more independent model of regulation and strengthen the social work profession. The Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence will also become more independent and self-funding. They will review the efficiency of all regulators, with a view to reducing the overall costs of regulation.

The Health Secretary also announced to Parliament today that herbal medicine practitioners will be regulated from April 2012. The four UK health departments have agreed that the Health Professions Council (HPC) should hold a statutory register of practitioners who supply unlicensed herbal medicines to people to enable the supply of herbal medicines to continue after 50 April 2011.

‘Proportionate and effective’ approach

Andrew Lansley

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GPS to map bat teeth

Biologists at the University of Massachusetts Amherst have “mapped” the topography of bat teeth. The clever use of GPS technology has been designed in order to better understand how toothy ridges, peaks and valleys have evolved to allow different species to eat everything from hard-shelled insects to blood and nectar.

Using a method based on geographic positioning systems, the researchers could characterise the topography of the bats’ molars in a way similar to how geographers characterise mountain surfaces. The researchers calculated a measure of dental complexity that reflects how “rugged” the surface of the tooth is and were able to illustrate a trend from relative simplicity of the shearing molars in insect eaters and omnivores to high complexity of the crushing molars in fruit eaters.

Working with field-collected bat skulls, researchers Sharlene Santana and Betsy Dumont of UMass Amherst, with Suzanne Strait of Marshall University, W. Va., compared the structure of molars across 17 species of the New World leaf-nosed bats that specialise in a variety of different diets (insects, fruits, and a combination).

They found that the molars of fruit-eating species had sharp outer edges that likely allow them to pierce tough fruit skin and pulp. By contrast, the molars of insect-eating species were less complex, possibly because of their smoother shearing surfaces. The study is published in the Feb. 16 online issue of the journal Functional Ecology.

Sweet taste of HPV cure?

New scientific research from New York based Cacao Biotechnologies is uncovering potential new applications for the antioxidant-rich cacao beans, which could spur an innovative approach to treating human papillomavirus (HPV), a precursor to oral and cervical cancer.

There are existing vaccines for the HPV virus, however, they only effective against a small number of high-risk, cancer-causing HPV strains and are not free of serious side-effects including convulsions and paralysis. As stated in the research article, “Vaccination will not cure someone who is already infected with the virus, so even with massive public health education campaigns, HPV will not soon be eradicated because it is so widely spread in the adult population.”

According to Penny Hitchcock, Chief of the Sexually Transmitted Diseases Branch of the US government’s National Division of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, further research on topical microbicides and effective vaccines is critical.

Buildings on the work of Cacao Biotechnologies’ co-founders Drs Mark Guiltinan and Siela Maxinova of Penn State University, scientists Dr Randall Murphy and Daniel Preston of Cacao Biotechnologies developed a suite of epicatechin-based super antioxidant compounds from cacao. The research article stated that based on the shape and an analysis of cacao molecules some epicatechin oligomers should have strong antiviral properties. Testing proved their theory correct and they had developed an antiviral compound specifically powerful against HPV.

B2A 2011 golf tournament

The Bridge2Aid (B2A) 2011 golf tournament is on and the team are delighted to announce that the hugely popular and now annual event will be held at Hankley Common Golf Course, in Farnham Surrey on August 50th, 2011.

Voted the 50th best golf course to play in the UK by Golf World Magazine and soon to host the Open Championship prequalifying competition in June, Hankley Common Golf Course provides the perfect setting for B2A’s tournament this summer.

Starting the day with a light breakfast, followed by 18 holes and topped off with a delicious three course lunch, prize giving and a special auction with a round of Golf at the prestigious Loch Lomond up for grabs – this year’s tournament is set to be the best yet! If you’re a budding golfer, keen to host a day out for your team or simply looking to support the charity, there are now 25 teams available to book in one of Surrey’s finest golf courses.

A team of four can be booked now for just £488. For more information on the day or to book your team contact Stuart Thompson now on 01485 504944.